

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 DHA-02 OMB-01 /059 W

-----120920Z 130998 /13

R 101005Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4585

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 2508

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SHUM, BG

SUBJECT: ZIA MEETS WITH CHRISTIAN LEADERS

REF: DACCA 2434

1. REFTEL REPORTED INTER ALIA THAT GENERAL ZIA HAD MET WITH LEADER OF BANGLADESH SCHEDULED CASTE FEDERATION IN APPARENT EFFORT TO EXPLAIN THE DROPPING OF SECULARISM FROM BASIC PRINCIPLES OF CONSTITUTION AND SEEK HIS ORGANIZATION'S SUPPORT IN REFERENDUM ON MAY 30.

2. WE ARE NOW UNFORMED THAT HE ALSO MET WITH CHRISTIAN LEADERS ON MAY 5. IN ATTENDANCE WITH BRITISH REPRESENTATIVE OF ANGLICAN BISHOP OF DACCA (A BANGLADESHI, WHO WAS OUT OF TOWN WHEN MEETING CALLED), A LEADER OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH AND THE ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP OF DACCA AND ANOTHER CATHOLIC BISHOP.

3. BRITISH ATTENDEE HAS TOLD EMBOFFS THET ZIA MADE EFFORT TO EXPLAIN THAT CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS OF MINORITIES HAD IN NO WAY BEEN ABROGATED. HE SAID THAT THE CHANGE RE-
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SULTED FROM BANGLADESH DESIRE TO DEMONSTRATE SOLIDARITY WITH OTHER NATIONS WHICH HAVE EXCLUSIVELY OR OVERWHELMINGLY MUSLIM POPULATIONS AND IMPLIED BANGLADESH HAS BEEN TAKEN TO TASK FOR ITS SECULAR STANCE BY SOME IN THIS GROUP. ZIA ALSO INDICATED THA BDG FELT THE POPULATION OF BANGLADESH OTHER THAN THE MINORITIES WHISHED TO HAVE CLEAR STATEMENT IN CONSTITUTION THAT ORDERING OF LIFE FOR THEN WOULD BE

ACCORDING TO ISLAMIC TENETS.

4. CHRISTIAN LEADERS CHATTING TOGETHER AFTER MEETING SEEMED, ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCE, TO BE UNCONVINCED THAT STATUS OF MINORITIES WOULD BE UNCHANGED REGARDLESS OF LEGAL POSITION. THEY HAVE POINTED TO PSYCHOLOGICAL CHANGE IN THAT THEY WERE "BANGLADESHIS" AS OTHERS WERE UNTIL NEW FORMULATION AND NOW ARE "MINORITIES" AND WERE SO DESCRIBED BY ZIA.

5. ALTHOUGH CHRISTIAN GROUP IS MINISCULE, SEVERAL IN THIS SECTOR OF POPULATION HAVE SAID THAT ZIA CANNOT COUNT ON THEIR VOTES IN REFERENDUM. CHRISTIANS HAVE IN PAST PARTICIPATED AT ABOVE AVERAGE LEVEL IN ELECTIONS.

6. COMMENT: WE TEND TO AGREE THAT PSYCHOLOGICAL RATHER THAN LEGAL STATUS WILL AFFECT CHRISTIANS HERE. SIMILARLY THIS WILL BE CASE WITH HINDUS (BOTH CASTE AND SCHEDULED CASTE).
MASTERS

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Message Attributes

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Control Number: n/a
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Sent Date: 10-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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